



Ontario Energy Board

GAS DISTRIBUTION ACCESS RULE

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1. GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

1.1 Purpose of this Rule

1.1.1 The purpose of this Rule is to:

- establish conditions of access to gas distribution services provided by a gas distributor;
- establish rules governing the conduct of a gas distributor as such conduct relates to a gas vendor; and
- establish Service Quality Requirements for natural gas distributors

consistent with the guiding objectives outlined in section 2 of the Act.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 In this Rule:

“Act” means the *Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998*, S.O. 1998, c.15, Schedule B;

“consumer information” means the data and/or information collected and maintained by a gas distributor pursuant to section 5.1 of this Rule;

“consumer” means a person who uses gas for that person’s own consumption;

“Customer Service Policy” means the document developed by a rate-regulated gas distributor in accordance with chapter 8 of this Rule that describes the customer service-related standards and practices applicable to its residential customers;

“E.B.O. 188 Report” means the Report of the Board, January 30, 1998 in the Matter of a Hearing to Inquire into, Hear and Determine Matters Relating to Natural Gas System Expansion for The Consumers’ Gas Company Ltd., Union Gas Limited and Centra Gas Ontario Inc.;

“eligible low-income customer” means a residential gas customer who has been approved by a LEAP Intake Agency for Emergency Financial Assistance;

“Emergency Financial Assistance” means emergency financial assistance under the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program established by the Board;

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“franchise area” means the area of the Province of Ontario either, for which a gas distributor holds a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity granted by the Board, or in which a gas distributor was supplying gas on April 1, 1933;

“gas distribution system” means the system used to provide gas distribution services;

“gas distribution services” means the services related to the delivery of gas to a consumer, including related safety functions such as emergency leak response, line locates, inspection, and provision of safety information;

“gas distributor” means a person who delivers gas to a consumer;

“gas distributor-consolidated billing” means a method of billing whereby a gas distributor issues a single bill to a consumer setting out the charges for gas distribution services and the charges for the gas commodity;

“gas vendor information” means data and/or information provided by a gas vendor to a gas distributor concerning that gas vendor;

“gas vendor” means a person who,

- sells or offers to sell gas to a consumer,
- acts as the agent or broker for a seller of gas to a consumer, or
- acts or offers to act as the agent or broker of a consumer in the purchase of gas;

“gas vendor-consolidated billing” means a method of billing whereby a gas vendor issues a single bill to a consumer setting out the charges for gas distribution services and the charges for the gas commodity;

“LEAP Intake Agency” means a social service agency, municipality or government agency that assesses a customer’s eligibility for Emergency Financial Assistance;

“low volume consumer” means a consumer who annually uses less than 50,000 cubic meters of gas or such other amount as may be prescribed for the purposes of section 2 of the *Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010*;

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“meter” means a device owned or controlled by a gas distributor and used to measure the units of gas consumption which form the basis for billing the consumer;

“rate-regulated gas distributor” means a gas distributor whose rates are approved by the Board pursuant to section 36 of the Act;

“Rule” means this rule entitled the “Gas Distribution Access Rule”;

“Service Agreement” means the agreement more specifically described in section 3.2 of this Rule that sets out certain aspects of the relationship between a gas distributor and a gas vendor;

“Service Transaction Request” or “STR” means a direction to a gas distributor more specifically described in chapter 4 of this Rule;

“split billing” means a method of billing whereby the gas distributor issues a bill to a consumer setting out the charges for gas distribution services, and the gas vendor issues a bill to a consumer setting out the charges for the gas commodity; and

“system gas” means gas which is sold or available to be sold by a gas distributor to a consumer.

1.3 Consumer’s Agent

1.3.1 For the purposes of this Rule, any action required or permitted to be performed by a consumer may be performed by an agent authorized in writing by the consumer.

1.4 Coming into Force

1.4.1 This Rule shall come into force on December 11, 2002, subject to subsections 1.4.2., 1.4.3, and 1.4.4. Any amendment to this Rule shall come into force on the date that the Board publishes the amendment by placing it on the Board’s website after it has been made by the Board, except where expressly provided otherwise.

1.4.2 Section 3.2 of this Rule shall come into force on January 1, 2007.

1.4.3 Chapter 4 of this Rule shall come into force on June 1, 2007.

1.4.4 Subsection 6.1.2.3 of this Rule shall come into force on January 1, 2007.

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- 1.4.5 Chapter 7 of this Rule shall come into force on January 1, 2007.
- 1.4.6 Chapter 8 of this Rule, together with the amendment to section 1.2.1 to include the definition of “Customer Service Policy”, shall come into force on April 1, 2012.
- 1.4.7 Subsection 8.1.3 and the amendments to subsection 1.2.1 to include the definition of “eligible low-income customer”, “Emergency Financial Assistance” and “social service agency or government agency” shall come into force on January 1, 2013.
- 1.4.8 Sections 4.3.10, 6.1.4 and 6.1.5 come into force on January 1, 2017.

1.5 Exemptions

- 1.5.1 The Board may grant an exemption to any provision of this Rule. An exemption may be made in whole or in part and may be subject to conditions or restrictions.

1.6 Filing Requirements

- 1.6.1 A gas distributor shall provide, in the manner, and form, and by the date determined by the Board, such information as the Board may require.

2. ACCESS TO GAS DISTRIBUTION SERVICES

2.1. Gas Distributor Provides Services

- 2.1.1 A gas distributor shall provide gas distribution services in a non-discriminatory manner.
- 2.1.2 A gas distributor shall respond to all requests for gas distribution services from a person in a timely manner. The gas distributor shall record, at a minimum, the receipt and response dates of each such request.

2.2 Connection to and Expansion of a Gas Distribution System

- 2.2.1 A gas distributor shall connect a building to its gas distribution system in accordance with subsection 42(2) of the Act.
- 2.2.2 A rate-regulated gas distributor shall assess and report on expansion to its gas distribution system in accordance with the guidelines contained in the E.B.O. 188 Report.

2.3. Gas Distributor Record Keeping Responsibilities

- 2.3.1 A gas distributor shall create or obtain, and maintain records relating to the following matters within its franchise area:
- system configuration;
 - system operating limitations; and
 - documents sufficient to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of this Rule.
- 2.3.2 The gas distributor shall file records described in subsection 2.3.1 of this Rule with the Board, if requested by the Board.

3 GAS DISTRIBUTOR-GAS VENDOR RELATIONS

3.1 General

3.1.1 A gas distributor shall conduct all relations with gas vendors in a non-discriminatory manner.

3.2 Service Agreement

3.2.1 A gas distributor shall enter into a Service Agreement, in a form approved by the Board, with each gas vendor who provides, or advises the gas distributor that it intends to provide, gas supply services to consumers in the gas distributor's franchise area.

3.2.2 A Service Agreement shall, at a minimum, include the following matters:

- the processing of STRs, as required in chapter 4 of this Rule;
- any right of a gas distributor to use consumer information in addition to those circumstances set out in section 5.2 of this Rule;
- any purposes for which the gas distributor may use gas vendor information, as provided for in subsection 3.3.1 of this Rule;
- the specific financial security arrangements between the gas distributor and the gas vendor, in accordance with the requirements of the security arrangements as described in section 3.4 of this Rule;
- terms and conditions of billing arrangements, including payment, interest on overdue accounts, and account finalization procedures;
- events of default, and procedures in the event of default;
- the procedures for finalizing changes in gas supply or billing option, including determination of effective dates;
- a dispute resolution process; and
- the obligation to include any safety information and any other information required by the Board in bills to consumers.

3.2.3 Despite subsection 3.2.1 of this Rule, a gas distributor and a gas vendor may include terms and conditions in their Service Agreement which are different from those in the Board-approved form of Service Agreement, providing none of the terms or conditions in the Service Agreement are in conflict with any rule or order of the Board.

3.2.4 A gas distributor shall file any Service Agreement with the Board, if requested by the Board.

3.3 Gas Vendor Information

3.3.1 Use of Gas Vendor Information

3.3.1.1 A gas distributor shall only use gas vendor information:

- (a) for purposes expressly set out in the Service Agreement; or
- (b) as otherwise authorized by the Board.

3.3.2 Restrictions on Disclosure

3.3.2.1 A gas distributor shall not disclose any data or information acquired by the gas distributor regarding a gas vendor to anyone other than the Board or as otherwise required by law, without the written consent of that gas vendor, unless specifically authorized by the Board.

3.3.2.2 A gas distributor may disclose information that has been sufficiently aggregated such that an individual gas vendor's information cannot reasonably be identified.

3.4 Financial Security Arrangements With Gas Vendors

3.4.1 Financial Security Arrangements

3.4.1.1 A gas distributor's security arrangements with each gas vendor shall be reasonable, and shall include:

- a list of the types of security that may be required;
- a description of how the amount of security is calculated;
- the limits on the amount of security required;
- the planned frequency and timing for updating the security arrangements;
- interest payable on deposits;
- provisions related to the cancellation of security arrangements; and
- conditions of default and realization of the security.

3.4.1.2 A gas distributor shall apply its security policy in a non-discriminatory manner taking into account:

- the type of security;
- the credit-worthiness of the gas vendor; and
- the magnitude of exposure.

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In estimating the magnitude of exposure, a gas distributor shall consider factors such as: the number of consumers served by the gas vendor, the average consumption of consumers served by the gas vendor, the length of the billing cycle, and the type of billing in place (e.g. gas vendor-consolidated, gas distributor-consolidated, or split billing).

3.4.2 *Filing Requirement*

3.4.2.1 A gas distributor shall provide a copy of its security policy to the Board and any other person, if requested.

4 SERVICE TRANSACTION REQUESTS

4.1 General

4.1.1 A gas distributor shall take every reasonable step to ensure that all information concerning consumers in the gas distributor's franchise area, including the identity of the consumer's gas vendor and billing option, is accurate and up-to-date.

4.1.2 This Rule addresses the following types of STRs:

- a change of gas supply from system gas to a gas vendor;
- a change of gas supply from one gas vendor to another gas vendor;
- a change of gas supply from a gas vendor to system gas;
- a change in billing option for a consumer; and
- a change in consumer service address when a gas vendor provides service.

A gas distributor shall process any request for a change or modification in service that is not included in the above list in accordance with the gas distributor's normal business practices.

4.1.3 Nothing in chapter 4 of this Rule shall be interpreted as in any way interfering with the contractual rights or obligations of gas distributors, gas vendors or consumers or the remedies available to gas distributors, gas vendors or consumers to enforce those contractual rights or obligations.

4.2 STR Information Requirements

4.2.1 A gas distributor shall be capable of processing, at a minimum, the following information as part of the STR process:

Consumer Identification Information

- consumer name;
- service address, including postal code, for which the change in service is requested;
- consumer mailing address, including postal code;
- consumer distribution service account number;
- meter identification number;

Gas Vendor Identification Information

- consumer account number with the gas vendor;
- gas vendor account number with the gas distributor;

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Service Transaction Information

- type of STR;
- specific date on which the transfer is requested or the earliest date after which transfer is acceptable to the gas vendor or the consumer;
- proposed method for finalizing the account;
- identification of the intended billing option; and
- new consumer service address, including postal code.

4.3 Processing and Verification

4.3.1 Gas Distributor Obligations

4.3.1.1 A gas distributor shall process STRs in the order in which they are received, and in accordance with the process set out below. The gas distributor shall record, at a minimum, the receipt and response dates of each request.

4.3.2 STR Acceptance

4.3.2.1 A gas distributor shall accept an STR from:

- (a) a consumer:
 - for a change of gas supply for that consumer from a gas vendor to system gas; or
 - for a change in that consumer's service address.
- (b) a consumer's current gas vendor:
 - for a change in billing option for a consumer;
 - for a change of gas supply for a consumer from the gas vendor to system gas pursuant to subsections 4.3.7.4, 4.3.7.5, 4.3.7.6 of this Rule; or
 - for a change in a consumer's service address.
- (c) a consumer's new gas vendor:
 - for a change of gas supply for a consumer from system gas to a gas vendor; or
 - for a change of gas supply for a consumer from one gas vendor to another, including a change in billing option.

4.3.2.2 If an STR is submitted by any other person, the gas distributor may reject the STR, and shall notify the requesting party.

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4.3.3 Initial Screening

4.3.3.1 If a gas distributor has accepted an STR, pursuant to subsection 4.3.2.1 of this Rule, the gas distributor shall determine if the STR has valid entries for the following terms (collectively, the “validation terms”):

- (a) If the consumer has an account number with the gas distributor,
 - the gas vendor’s account number with the gas distributor;
 - the consumer’s account number with the gas distributor; and
 - at least one of:
 - (1) the consumer’s name, and
 - (2) the consumer’s postal code.
- (b) If the consumer does not have an account number with the gas distributor,
 - the gas vendor’s account number with the gas distributor;
 - the consumer’s name; and
 - the consumer’s postal code.

4.3.3.2 A valid entry is an entry that matches the information contained in the gas distributor's information system.

4.3.3.3 If the STR does not contain valid entries for the validation terms, the gas distributor shall reject the STR and shall notify the requesting party.

4.3.3.4 If the STR contains valid entries for the validation terms, and there is not a pending STR with respect to the consumer, the gas distributor shall tag the STR as “pending.”

4.3.3.5 If the STR is for a change in gas supply and there is a pending STR for a change in gas supply, the gas distributor shall reject the STR and notify the requesting party.

4.3.3.6 If the gas distributor determines that any information, in addition to the validation terms, necessary to implement the pending STR is inaccurate or incomplete, the gas distributor shall suspend processing the STR and shall notify the requesting party.

4.3.3.7 A gas distributor shall complete the initial screening process within 14 days of receipt of the STR.

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4.3.4 *Additional Information*

4.3.4.1 If the requesting party has not provided the necessary information required pursuant to notification in subsection 4.3.3.6 of this Rule, within 30 days from receipt of the STR, the gas distributor shall reject the STR and shall notify the requesting party.

4.3.4.2 The gas distributor shall resume processing the pending STR once the requesting party has provided the gas distributor with all of the necessary information.

4.3.5 *Processing a Change from System Gas to a Gas Vendor*

Insufficient Security

4.3.5.1 If the gas distributor determines that the gas vendor has insufficient security in place to fulfill its financial security obligations, the gas distributor shall notify the gas vendor, and may suspend processing the STR until the gas vendor has provided sufficient security.

4.3.5.2 The gas distributor shall resume processing the STR when the gas vendor provides sufficient security.

4.3.5.3 The gas distributor may stop processing the STR if the gas vendor has not provided sufficient security within 30 days of the notice given pursuant to section 4.3.5.1 of this Rule.

4.3.5.4 If the gas distributor stops processing the STR, the gas distributor shall notify all affected parties.

Consumer Default

4.3.5.5 A gas distributor shall process the STR of a consumer from system gas to the gas vendor unless the consumer is in default of any obligation to the gas distributor.

4.3.5.6 If the consumer is in default, the gas distributor may suspend processing of the STR and shall notify the requesting party.

4.3.5.7 The gas distributor shall resume processing the STR when the consumer is no longer in default.

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4.3.6 Processing a Change from Current Gas Vendor to New Gas Vendor

Insufficient Security

- 4.3.6.1 If the gas distributor determines that the new gas vendor has insufficient security in place to fulfill its financial security obligations, the gas distributor shall notify the new gas vendor, and may suspend processing the STR until the new gas vendor has provided sufficient security.
- 4.3.6.2 The gas distributor shall resume processing the STR when the new gas vendor provides sufficient security.
- 4.3.6.3 The gas distributor may stop processing the STR if the new gas vendor has not provided sufficient security within 30 days of the notice given pursuant to section 4.3.6.1 of this Rule.
- 4.3.6.4 If the gas distributor stops processing the STR, the gas distributor shall notify all affected parties.

Notification to Current Gas Vendor

- 4.3.6.5 If a gas distributor receives an STR to transfer a consumer from the consumer's current gas vendor to a new gas vendor, and the gas distributor has determined that the new gas vendor has sufficient security, the gas distributor shall notify the current gas vendor of the pending STR.
- 4.3.6.6 The gas distributor shall continue to process the STR unless, within 30 days of the notification set out in subsection 4.3.6.5 of this Rule, the gas distributor receives written authorization from the consumer, the new gas vendor, or the current gas vendor (acting on specific written authorization from the consumer) to stop processing the STR.
- 4.3.6.7 If the gas distributor stops processing the STR, the gas distributor shall notify all affected parties.

4.3.7 Processing a Change from a Gas Vendor to System Gas

Consumer Request

- 4.3.7.1 If a gas distributor receives an STR from a consumer to transfer that consumer from the consumer's current gas vendor to system gas, the gas distributor shall notify the current gas vendor of the pending STR.
- 4.3.7.2 The gas distributor shall continue to process the STR unless, within 14 days of the notification set out in subsection 4.3.7.1 of this Rule, the gas

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distributor receives written authorization from the consumer or the current gas vendor (acting on specific written authorization from the consumer to cancel the consumer's STR) to stop processing the STR.

4.3.7.3 If the gas distributor stops processing the STR, the gas distributor shall notify all affected parties.

Gas Vendor Request

4.3.7.4 A gas distributor shall not process an STR from a consumer's gas vendor unless the consumer's contract with the gas vendor has been terminated due to the consumer's default, or has expired or will expire on or before the proposed transfer date.

4.3.7.5 If a gas distributor receives an STR from a consumer's current gas vendor to transfer that consumer to system gas, the gas distributor shall notify the consumer of the pending STR.

4.3.7.6 A gas distributor shall process the STR unless, within 30 days of the notification set out in subsection 4.3.7.5 of this Rule, the gas distributor receives written direction from the current gas vendor to terminate the transfer.

4.3.8 Processing a Change of Billing Option

4.3.8.1 If the gas distributor determines that the gas vendor has insufficient security in place to fulfill its financial security obligations, the gas distributor shall notify the gas vendor, and may suspend processing the STR until the gas vendor has provided sufficient security.

4.3.9 Processing a Request for Relocation When a Gas Vendor Provides Service

4.3.9.1 If a gas distributor receives an STR from a consumer to terminate service at that consumer's service address, or relocate within the gas distributor's franchise area, the gas distributor shall notify the consumer's current gas vendor that the consumer is terminating service at one location, or relocating to another location within the gas distributor's franchise area, as the case may be.

4.3.10 Notification of Transfer to Low Volume Consumer

Beginning on July 1, 2017, where a gas distributor processes an STR for a change in supply in respect of a low volume consumer under section 4.3.5 or 4.3.6, the gas distributor shall notify the low volume consumer of the transfer in writing using the form of notice approved by the Board. The notice shall be sent

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within 5 business days of the date on which processing of the STR has been completed. The notice must be sent to the low volume consumer separate from any other communication from the gas distributor, including the bill. Subject to any arrangements to the contrary that a gas distributor may have with a low volume consumer in relation to communications, the notice may be sent to the low volume consumer by courier, mail, facsimile or e-mail.

4.4 Notification Requirements

- 4.4.1 Any time a gas distributor rejects, stops or suspends processing an STR, the gas distributor shall include in any notification the specific reasons for the gas distributor taking this action.

4.5 STR Implementation Date

- 4.5.1 The gas distributor shall notify the requesting party of the gas distributor's proposed STR implementation date as soon as practicable.

4.6 Implementation Deadline

- 4.6.1 A gas distributor shall implement the direction contained in an STR in a timely manner, but in any event, no later than 60 days from the date that the gas distributor receives a valid and complete STR, provided that this time limit shall not include the time which elapses while the gas distributor has suspended processing the STR.

4.7 Electronic Business Transaction System

- 4.7.1 A gas distributor shall implement any computer-based transaction mechanism, i.e. Electronic Business Transaction System (EBT) for transmitting common format data among gas distributors and gas vendors, if mandated by the Board.

4.8 Transfer of Consumer to System Gas when a Gas Distributor Terminates a Service Agreement

- 4.8.1 If the gas distributor terminates a Service Agreement with a gas vendor, the gas distributor shall notify the gas vendor and the gas vendor's consumers and shall transfer the consumers to system gas according to a procedure specified by the gas distributor in the notice.

5 CONSUMER INFORMATION

5.1 Description of Consumer Information

5.1.1 The gas distributor shall, at a minimum, create or obtain, and maintain the following information on all consumers who are provided gas distribution services by the gas distributor:

for identification purposes:

- consumer name;
- service address, including postal code;
- consumer mailing address, including postal code;
- consumer distribution service account number;
- meter identification number;

for billing purposes:

- billing address, including postal code;
- gas distribution services contracted for;
- units of consumption, estimated or actual, by billing period;
- meter reading dates;
- dates of bills rendered based on actual meter readings;
- dates of bills rendered based on estimated meter readings;
- dates of bills rendered based on methods other than actual or estimated meter readings;
- method of bill calculation (e.g., equal billing);

for payment profile purposes:

- payment due dates, payment receipt dates;
- number of times the consumer was delinquent or in arrears in the past 24 months;
- maximum credit exposure in the past 24 months;
- number of times the consumer's security arrangements were revised in the past 24 months;

for consumption information:

- 24 months of consumption data by individual distribution service consumed.

5.2 Use of Consumer Information

5.2.1 A gas distributor shall only use consumer information:

- (a) necessary to provide gas distribution services;

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- (b) necessary for system operations;
- (c) necessary to provide system gas;
- (d) for purposes expressly set out in the Service Agreement; or
- (e) as otherwise authorized by the Board.

5.3 Restrictions on Disclosure

- 5.3.1 A gas distributor shall not disclose any data or information acquired by the gas distributor regarding a consumer to anyone other than the Board, or any person as required by law, without the written consent of that consumer, unless specifically authorized by the Board.
- 5.3.2 A gas distributor may disclose information that has been sufficiently aggregated such that an individual consumer's information cannot reasonably be identified.

5.4 Retention of Consumer Information

- 5.4.1 A gas distributor shall, at a minimum, retain consumer information until the later of:
 - (a) 24 months;
 - (b) the period of time required by the Board; and
 - (c) the period of time required by law.

5.5 Release of Information

- 5.5.1 A gas distributor shall provide consumer information with respect to a consumer in accordance with any written direction received from that consumer.
- 5.5.2 The gas distributor shall provide the consumer information as outlined in section 5.1 of this Rule in the format requested by the consumer, if available, or, at a minimum, in hard copy.

5.6 Access to the Meter

- 5.6.1 A gas distributor shall provide a consumer with unfettered access to the meter to be able to interrogate the meter, provided:
 - 5.6.1.1 the device used to interrogate the meter complies with the gas distributor's reasonable technical requirements; and
 - 5.6.1.2 such access to the meter does not interfere with the operation or function of the meter or impair or impede the ability of the gas distributor to read the meter at normally scheduled times.

6 BILLING

6.1 Gas Distributor Obligations

- 6.1.1 For the purposes of bill processing, the gas distributor shall be responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the information which the gas distributor provides and the gas vendor shall be responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the information which the gas vendor provides, according to the terms of the Service Agreement.
- 6.1.2 Gas distributors shall have the ability to accommodate each of the following billing options:
- 6.1.2.1 gas distributor-consolidated billing;
 - 6.1.2.2 split billing; and
 - 6.1.2.3 gas vendor-consolidated billing.
- 6.1.3 In case of gas vendor-consolidated billing and split billing, a gas distributor shall provide the gas vendor with sufficient and timely data and information to enable the gas vendor to issue the bill to the consumer.
- 6.1.4 Beginning on July 1, 2017, in the case of gas distributor-consolidated billing, and despite any Service Agreement, a gas distributor shall, in respect of a low volume consumer that is served by a gas vendor, include, on the part of each bill submitted to the low volume consumer that relates to the commodity price, the phrase "YOU ARE BUYING YOUR GAS FROM", followed by the gas vendor's name in capital letters. The gas distributor shall also include on the bill, immediately following the gas vendor's name, either (a) the gas vendor's toll-free telephone number and website address as provided by the gas vendor; or (b) an asterisk or other symbol of equivalent effect to indicate that the gas distributor has included the gas vendor's toll-free telephone number and website address elsewhere on the bill. A gas distributor may also include the gas vendor's e-mail address as provided by the gas vendor, in which case the e-mail address shall appear immediately following the gas vendor's website address.
- 6.1.5 Despite any Service Agreement, a gas vendor shall provide each applicable gas distributor with the gas vendor's name, toll-free telephone number, website address and e-mail address for the purposes of section 6.1.4.

6.2 Risk of Non-Payment

- 6.2.1 The gas distributor shall bear the risk of consumer non-payment (1) for the entire bill, including the gas commodity for gas distributor-consolidated billing; and (2) for gas distribution services for split billing. A gas distributor shall not bear the risk of consumer non-payment for gas vendor-consolidated billing.

7 SERVICE QUALITY REQUIREMENTS PERFORMANCE AND MEASUREMENT

7.1 General Provisions

7.1.1 The purpose of this section is to establish performance standards and measurements for the natural gas industry in Ontario.

7.2 Identifying Service Quality Requirements

7.2.1 A gas distributor must observe and track its performance with respect to the following list of service quality requirements:

- a) Telephone Answering Performance;
- b) Billing Performance;
- c) Meter Reading Performance;
- d) Service Appointment Response Times;
- e) Gas Emergency Response
- f) Customer Complaint (Written) Response; and
- g) Disconnection/Reconnection.

7.3 Definitions and Performance Measurements

7.3.1 Telephone Answering Performance

Telephone Answering Performance is a service quality indicator that is based on a centralized facility established or outsourced to handle calls and other inquiries from customers. The measurement of this requirement will include the following categories of calls: billing; collections; emergencies; and meter appointments.

Data for the call answer performance measures shall be obtained by monitoring calls on the distributors' telephone systems including the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system.

7.3.1.1 Call Answering Service Level

The percentage of all calls to the general inquiry phone number, including IVR calls that are answered within 30 seconds. This measure will track the percentage of attempted calls that are satisfied within the IVR or successfully reach a live operator within 30 seconds of reaching the distributor's general inquiry number. The operator must be ready to accept calls and to provide information.

This measurement will be calculated as follows:

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$$\frac{\text{Number of calls reaching a distributor's general inquiry number answered within 30 seconds}}{\text{Number of calls received by a distributor's general inquiry number}}$$

The yearly performance standard for the Call Answering Service Level shall be 75% with a minimum monthly standard of 40%.

7.3.1.2 Abandon Rate

The abandon rate means the percentage of callers who hang up while waiting for a live operator. This measure will track the percentage of callers that hang up before they reach a live operator. This measurement will be calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of calls abandoned while waiting for a live agent}}{\text{Total number of calls requesting to speak to a live agent}}$$

The performance for this standard shall not exceed 10% on a yearly basis.

7.3.2 *Billing Performance*

The billing performance standard is a quality assurance standard. The standard requires gas distributors to have a verifiable quality assurance program in place. No specific metric is attached to this requirement.

7.3.2.1 Audits

Distributors must audit their billing data for accuracy. Manual checks must be done to validate data when meter reads fall outside criteria, as set out in the quality assurance program, for excessively high or low usage. In addition, the quality assurance program must include random audits of data quality and billing accuracy.

7.3.3 *Meter Reading Performance*

A distributor may choose to estimate the meter read for various reasons which may include limited access (e.g., a customer has an inside meter or the access to the meter is restricted) and the expense of actual meter reads. It is cost prohibitive to get actual meter reads each month. As a result, the following measurement is put in place to set out the minimum requirements for meter reads.

7.3.3.1 Meter Reading Performance Measurement

The meter reading performance measurement requirement will measure the percentage of meters with no read for four consecutive months.

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Callers who call in their meter reads will be considered to have had their meters read. The measurement will be calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of meters with no read for 4 consecutive months or more}}{\text{Total number of active meters to be read}}$$

This measurement shall not exceed 0.5% on a yearly basis.

7.3.4 *Service Appointment Response Time*

A distributor will ensure that appointment times are scheduled and, if requested, a customer shall be given an appointment time with a four hour window (i.e., morning, afternoon, or evening). This measurement will track the accuracy of response to these appointment times. Only the appointments that require the customer's presence will be included in this measurement.

7.3.4.1 Appointments Met Within the Designated Time Period

This measurement will identify the percentage of appointments, including meter related or other customer related work, that are met within their 4 hour scheduled time/date as arranged with the customer. This includes appointments for installations, meter reads and reconnection appointments (not including those due to non-payment). This measurement will be calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of appointments met within the 4 hour scheduled time/date}}{\text{Total number of appointments scheduled in the reporting month}}$$

The minimum performance standard for this measurement shall be 85% averaged over a year.

7.3.4.2 Time to Reschedule a Missed Appointment

This measurement tracks the time taken to contact the consumer to offer to reschedule a missed appointment. This includes appointments for meter related customer requests or other customer requested work such as installations, meter reads and reconnection appointments not due to non-payment. At minimum, the distributor must contact the customer to reschedule the work within 2 hours of the end of the original appointment time.

The minimum performance standard shall be that 100% of affected customers will receive a call offering to reschedule work within 2 hours of the end of the original appointment time.

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7.3.5 Gas Emergency Response

Gas Emergency Response is defined as the speed and effectiveness of response to gas escapes and other emergencies in order to alleviate the consequences of detrimental effects. Note that distributors are secondary responders; the primary response to emergencies is provided by the 911 Emergency Response service.

See Schedule A for a more detailed description of natural gas emergencies. The list will include:

- Aerial Patrol
- Asphyxiation or Injury
- Blowing Gas
- Carbon Monoxide
- Emergency Provider Assistance
- Evacuation
- Fire or Explosion
- Flooding
- Iced Over Regulators
- Low or High Pressure
- Main Service Damage
- Natural Gas/Methane Detector Alarming
- Other Combustibles
- Outdoor Gas Leak/Odour
- Steam
- Strong Indoor Odour*

* Note: this category includes any indoor odour (even slight) which will be considered an emergency in a Care or Detention Centre (such as hospitals, day care centres, nursing homes, homes for senior citizens, permanent correctional facilities, permanent psychiatric institutions, and schools).

7.3.5.1 Percentage of Emergency Calls Responded to Within One Hour

This measurement will track the average response time to emergencies such as gas leaks, damages and other high priority situations. The response time is calculated from the time the caller reaches a live representative from the distribution company to the time the gas representative arrives on site. The measurement shall be calculated as follows:

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$$\frac{\text{Number of emergency calls responded to within 60 minutes}}{\text{Total number of emergency calls in the year}}$$

The minimum performance standard shall be that 90% of customers have received a response within 60 minutes of their call reaching a live person. The standard shall be calculated on an annual basis.

7.3.5.2 Documentation of Emergency Response

In order to meet the Service Quality Performance Requirements, Distributors must document emergency procedures for each type of emergency event to ensure that responders to emergencies follow the Distributor's approved emergency procedures.

7.3.6 *Customer Complaint Written Response*

This measurement will ensure that a customer's complaint is responded to in a timely and effective manner. A complaint is a written expression of grievance or dissatisfaction from a customer about a decision, action taken, or failure to act by the distributor that is received as a written complaint to the distributor (i.e., by letter or email).

7.3.6.1 Number of Days to Provide a Written Response

The distributor will send a substantive written response to a customer grievance within 10 days of receiving the written complaint. If the grievance needs to be investigated further and more time is required to fully respond to the complaint, an interim response will be sent until a final response can be sent. A substantive response is a response that addresses the issues raised by the complainant. If the customer wishes to have a verbal response instead of a written one, it will not be counted in this measurement. The measurement shall be calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of complaints requiring a written response responded to within 10 days}}{\text{Number of complaints requiring a written response}}$$

The minimum performance standard shall be that 80% of customers will receive a written response in 10 days of the distributor receiving the complaint.

7.3.7 *Reconnection Response Time*

The purpose of this measurement is to track the number of days required to reconnect a customer due to a disconnection for non-payment.

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7.3.7.1 Number of Days to Reconnect a Customer

Once the customer is in good standing as a result of a payment made, the reconnection should be made within 2 business days. This measurement shall be calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of reconnections completed within 2 business days}}{\text{Total number of reconnections completed}}$$

The minimum performance standard shall be that 85% of customers are reconnected within 2 business days of bringing their accounts into good standing. This will be tracked on a monthly basis.

8 Customer Service Standards and Practices Applicable to Residential Customers

8.1 General

- 8.1.1 A rate-regulated gas distributor shall document its customer service-related standards and practices applicable to residential customers in a Customer Service Policy.
- 8.1.2 A Customer Service Policy shall, at a minimum, include a description of the rate-regulated gas distributor's standards and practices for each of the following customer service-related areas:
- (a) bill issuance and payment;
 - (b) allocation of payments between gas and non-gas charges;
 - (c) correction of billing errors;
 - (d) equal payment and equal billing plans;
 - (e) disconnection for non-payment;
 - (f) security deposits;
 - (g) arrears management programs; and
 - (h) management of customer accounts.
- 8.1.3 Where a rate-regulated gas distributor has established customer service-related standards and practices specific to eligible low-income customers, the gas distributor shall describe them in its Customer Service Policy in a manner separate and apart from its customer service-related standards and practices applicable to other residential customers.

8.2 Policy to be Published

- 8.2.1 A rate-regulated gas distributor shall file a copy of its Customer Service Policy with the Board, make a copy publicly available for viewing at its head office and on its web site, and provide a copy to each person that requests it.
- 8.2.2 A rate-regulated gas distributor shall, promptly after the coming into force date of this section, notify its residential customers that it has filed a new or amended Customer Service Policy with the Board and shall provide direction as to where a copy may be viewed and how a copy may be obtained.

8.3 Compliance

8.3.1 Subject to this Rule and other applicable laws, a rate-regulated gas distributor shall comply with its Customer Service Policy but may waive any provision therein in favour of a customer or potential customer.

8.3.2 Commencing in 2013, a rate-regulated gas distributor shall provide, in the form and manner required by the Board, annually by April 30 for the prior calendar year, a statement certifying its compliance with its Customer Service Policy.

8.3.3 A rate-regulated gas distributor shall maintain a compliance monitoring program that enables it to monitor its compliance with its Customer Service Policy and to identify any need for remedial action. A rate-regulated gas distributor shall maintain updated records in a form and manner so as to be able to substantiate its self-certification.

8.3.4 Each statement certifying a rate-regulated gas distributor's compliance with its Customer Service Policy shall be signed by the gas distributor's Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, President or person of equivalent position.

8.3.5 A rate-regulated gas distributor shall provide its initial self-certification statement to the Board by April 30, 2013.

8.4 Dispute Resolution

8.4.1 A Customer Service Policy shall describe the rate-regulated gas distributor's process for resolving customer complaints.

8.4.2 If a rate-regulated gas distributor cannot resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant, the rate-regulated gas distributor shall provide to the complainant contact information for the Ontario Energy Board's Consumer Relations Centre.

8.5 Revisions to a Customer Service Policy

8.5.1 A rate-regulated gas distributor shall provide advance public notice of any revisions to its Customer Service Policy. Notice shall be, at a minimum, provided to each residential customer by means of a note on or included with the customer's bill. The notice shall include the timeline for implementation of the revisions to the Customer Service Policy.

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- 8.5.2 A rate-regulated gas distributor shall provide the Board with a copy of its revised Customer Service Policy. The revised Customer Service Policy shall be accompanied by a cover letter that indicates the revisions made and their implementation date.

Schedule A

Description of Type of Emergencies

Aerial Patrol

- Reports from aerial patrol contractor that someone is or may be excavating near a high priority line.

Asphyxiation or Injury

- A call from any source where a person has been injured, overcome, or is nauseated, and gas fumes are suspected.

Blowing Gas

- Any reports of blowing gas. Reports of a pinched off line shall be treated the same as blowing gas.

Carbon Monoxide

- CO symptoms are identified and an emergency provider (such as Fire or Police Department) calls the gas distributor for assistance.

Emergency Provider Assistance

- Any calls from emergency providers requesting immediate assistance (Fire or Police Department etc.).

Evacuation

- Any time a building has been evacuated because of a known or unknown strong odour.

Fire or explosion

- Call received from any source for a fire or explosion.

Flooding

- Shut off meters for flooding (priority could change based on local management input).

Iced Over Regulators (Whether Pressure is Affected or Not)

- Reports of iced over regulators.

Low or High Pressure

- Reports of pilot or main burner flames being larger than normal.
- Reports from a contractor or customer that a regulator malfunction has created an unsafe condition.

Main/Service Damage

- Hit line and no blowing gas (includes third party reports of damaged coatings).

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Natural Gas/Methane Detector Alarming

- A natural gas/methane detector is alarming.

Other Combustibles

- Calls regarding a leakage or spill of another combustible (conference call with the Fire Department to ensure they are dispatched as well).

Outdoor Gas Leak/Odour

- Strong odour or sound of gas escaping outside.
- Any outdoor odour where the source is unknown.
- Any "A" leaks called in by leak surveyors (company or contractor).

Steam

- A water heater or boiler is overheating and steam is escaping from taps and/or a relief valve.

Strong Indoor Odour

- Strong odour or sound of gas escaping inside a building.
- Any odour (even slight) at a Care or Detention Centre*.

* Care or Detention Centre include hospitals, day care centres, nursing homes, senior citizen's homes, permanent correctional facilities, permanent psychiatric institutions, and schools.